

Democracy and Governance in Colonial New Jersey

New Jersey Center for Civic Education, Rutgers University, Piscataway, NJ



Proprietary House, Perth Amboy, official residence for NJ's Royal Governor, 1764-1776

Grade Level: 5-8

Objectives: Student will:

- Analyze several historical documents and identify beliefs presented in them about equality, liberty and consent of the governed and how they relate to the historical foundation of New Jersey and the United States
- Draw conclusions about the extent and nature of religious and political liberties that were guaranteed by colonial governments to their citizens.

NJCCCS Social Studies Standards:

- 6.1.8.A.2.a Determine the roles of religious freedom and participatory government in various North American colonies.
- 6.1.8.A.2.b Explain how and why early government structures developed, and determine the impact of these early structures on the evolution of American politics and institutions.
- 6.1.8.A.2.c Explain how race, gender and status affected social, economic and political opportunities during colonial times.
- 6.1.4.A.3 Determine how "fairness," "equality," and the "[common good](#)" have influenced change at the local and national levels of United States government.
- 6.1.4.A.9 Compare and contrast responses of individuals and groups, past and present, to violations of fundamental rights.
- 6.1.4.D.4 Explain the key events that led to the creation of the United States and the state of New Jersey.
- 6.1.4.D.5 Relate key historical documents (i.e., the Mayflower Compact...) to present day government and citizenship.

Common Core ELA Standards:

- [RH.6-8.1](#) Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- [RH.6-8.2](#) Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

- [RH.6-8.4](#) Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
- [WHST.6-8.1b](#) Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant, accurate data and evidence that demonstrate an understanding of the topic or text, using credible sources.

Focus Questions:

How did New Jersey become a British colony?

How and why did the British Proprietors divide New Jersey?

How did the British American colonies govern themselves?

How and why are American ideals, such as equality, liberty and consent of the governed, embodied in key historic documents?

What was the extent and nature of religious and political liberties that were guaranteed by colonial governments to their citizens?

How do primary sources help us to understand what happened in the past?

Background:

1. How did New Jersey become a British colony?
 - Scattered Dutch, Swedes and Finns lived in the area of NJ since the 1630s
 - After Britain won the Anglo-Dutch war in 1664 New Amsterdam came under British control as New York.
 - After the second Anglo-Dutch war 1672-78, the Delaware Valley came under English control
2. How and why did the British Proprietors divide New Jersey? How were the Provinces of East and West Jersey established?
 - The Duke of York gave the land of NJ to two of his friend: Lord John Berkeley and Sir George Carteret.
 - In 1674 Berkeley sold his share of the colony to a religious group known as the Quakers or Society of Friends
 - Look at the map of East and West Jersey below. Why are there three different lines showing the boundary? The boundary was based on a poorly drawn map and the colonists argued about it for more than 140 years.
 - Province Line Road can still be found running near Princeton in Mercer County, where a plaque commemorates the boundary and its history.
3. How did the British American colonies govern themselves?
 - Through agreements such as the Mayflower Compact, and the Agreement of the Proprietors of East and West Jersey
4. Discuss the following vocabulary:
 - What does "consent of the governed" mean?
 - What was a "proprietor"?

- What is a “Quaker”?
- What is “religious tolerance”?

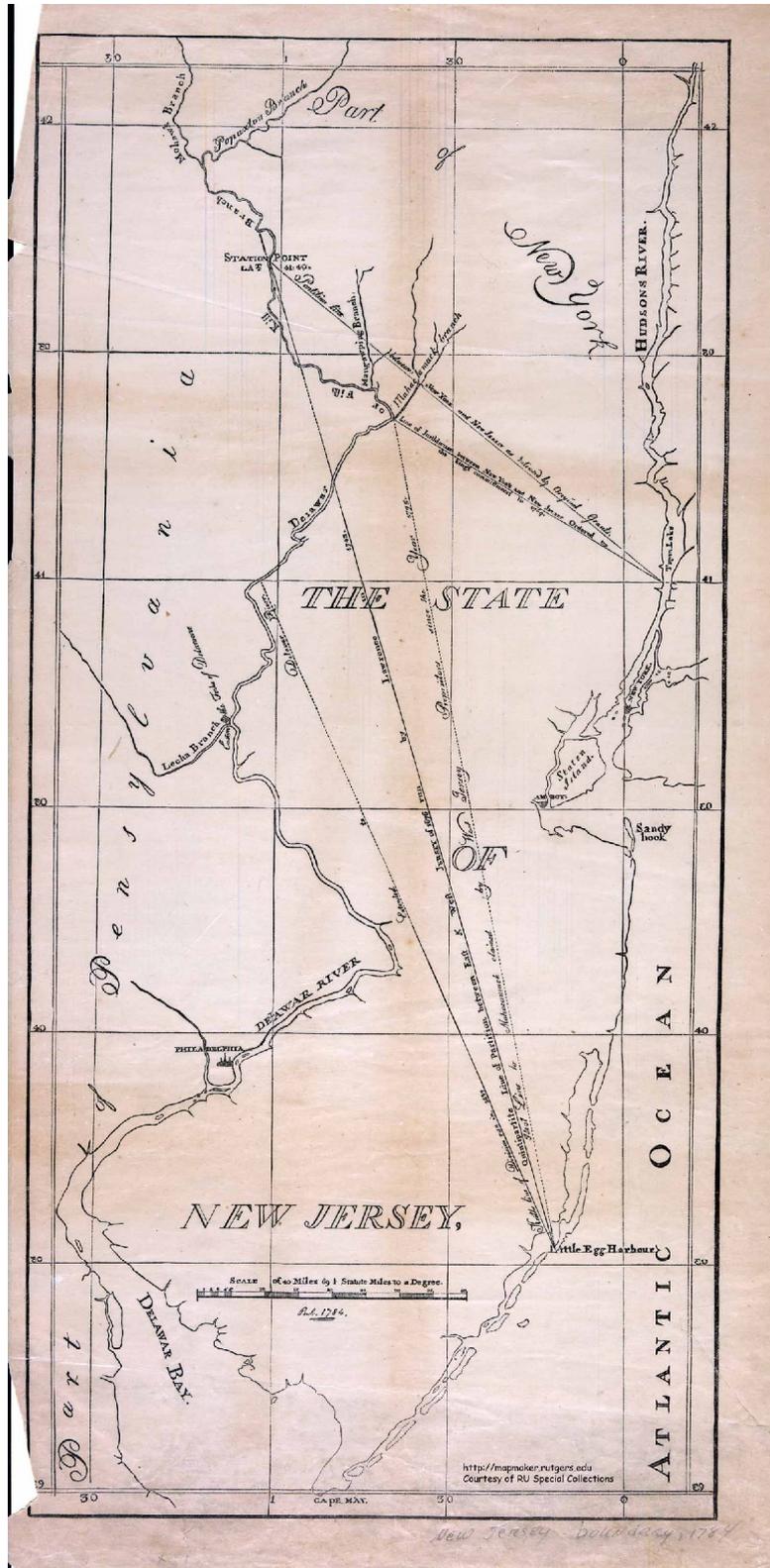
Activities:

1. What ideas and beliefs influenced the development of colonial governments? Find them in the Mayflower Compact and the founding documents for the colony of New Jersey.
 - Students read and discuss the Mayflower Compact (excerpt attached) and discuss the political ideas of the first colonists
 - Then divide the class into three groups. The members of each of the three groups read and discuss one of the following three founding documents:
 1. Agreement of the Lords Proprietors of the Province of New Jersey, 1664 (excerpt attached)
 2. Charter for the Province of West Jersey, 1676 (excerpt attached)
 3. Fundamental Constitutions for the Province of East Jersey, 1683 (excerpt attached)
 - Those assigned the same document meet to determine the key ideas that they will share about their document.
 - Jigsaw so that there is at least one “expert” for each document in a new grouping. Experts share the key ideas with other members of the new groups.
 - Students use a graphic organizer to take notes about each document as well as the Mayflower Compact.
2. Once students have notes about the key ideas from each document, then the small groups draw conclusions about what ideas and beliefs were viewed as important in setting up the colonial government of New Jersey and how these ideas and beliefs would influence the liberties of the people. Students respond to the following questions regarding religious and political liberties guaranteed in the three New Jersey historical documents:
 - Why was religious tolerance important to the 17th century European settlers in New Jersey?
 - Why did the proprietors of New Jersey think it was necessary to grant a degree of religious freedom to the settlers in the colony?
 - Do you think that the English conquest of the Dutch in what is now New York and eastern New Jersey had an effect on religious freedom in the colony?
 - Did the Quaker views have any effect on religious freedom in New Jersey?
 - Did the laws, charters, agreements, and constitutions discriminate against anyone?
 - Did religious freedom in New Jersey increase or decrease from 1664 to 1683?
3. Discuss and draw conclusions: How do primary sources help us to understand what happened in the past?

Assessment:

Students write an essay responding to one or more of the following critical thinking questions, providing support for their conclusions:

1. Do you think the laws and government established in the founding constitutions were fair?
2. How and why are American ideals, such as equality, liberty and consent of the governed, embodied in key historic documents?
3. Did colonists in New England and New Jersey enjoy religious freedom?



East and West Jersey boundary line(s), 1784
http://mapmaker.rutgers.edu/BoundaryLines_1784.jpg

Excerpt from the Mayflower Compact, 1620

(Full document may be found at avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/mayflower.asp)

"for our better Ordering and Preservation, and Furtherance of the Ends aforesaid: And by Virtue hereof do enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions, and Officers, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general Good of the Colony; unto which we promise all due Submission and Obedience.. ."

Excerpt from Agreement of the Lords Proprietors of the Province of New Jersey, 1664

(Full document may be at avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/statech.asp)

"...no person qualified as aforesaid within the said Province, at any time shall be any ways molested, punished, disquieted or called in question for any difference in opinion or practice in matte of religious concernments, who do not actually disturb the civil peace of the said Province; but that all and every such person and persons may from time to time, and at all times, freely and fully have an' enjoy his and their judgments and consciences in' masters of religion throughout the said Province they behaving themselves peaceably ant quietly, and not using this liberty to licentiousness, nor to the civil injury or outward disturbance of others; any law, statute or clause contained, or to be contained, usage or custom of this realm o England, to the contrary thereof in any wise notwithstanding"

Excerpts from Charter for the Province of West New Jersey, 1676

(Full document may be found at avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/statech.asp)

"...we the Governor and Proprietors, freeholders and inhabitants of West New Jersey, by mutual consent and agreement, for the prevention of invasion and oppression, ...and for the preservation of the peace and tranquility of the same: We do make and constitute these our agreements there shall be a General Free Assembly for the Province aforesaid, yearly and every year, at a day certain, chosen by the free people of the said Province, whereon all the representatives for the said Province, shall be summoned to appear, to consider of the affairs of the said Province, and to make and ordain such acts, and laws, as shall be requisite and necessary for the good government and prosperity of the free people of the said Province."

"...no men, nor number of men upon earth, hath power or authority to rule over men's consciences in religious matters, therefore it is consented, agreed and ordained, that no person or persons whatsoever within the said Province, at any time or times hereafter, shall be any ways upon any presence whatsoever, called in question, or in the least punished or hurt, either in person, estate, or privilege, for the sake of his opinion, judgment, faith or worship towards God in matters of religion. But that all and every such person, and persons may from time to time, and at all times, freely and fully have, and enjoy his and their judgments, and the exercises of their consciences in matters of religious worship throughout all the said Province."

Excerpts from the Fundamental Constitutions for the Province of East New Jersey, 1683

(Full document may be found at avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/statech.asp)

"Since the right of government, as well as soil, is in the four and twenty Proprietors, and that the same is confirmed to them a new by a late patent from James Duke of York pursuant to patent granted to Him from the King; the Proprietors for the well ordering and governing of the said Province, according to the powers conveyed to them, do grant and declare, that the government thereof shall be as followeth, VIZ. ...for the government of the Province, there shall be a great Council, to consist of the four and twenty proprietors, or their proxies in their absence, and one hundred forty-four to be chosen by the freemen of the Province."
XVI. All persons living in the Province who confess and acknowledge the one Almighty and Eternal God, and holds themselves obliged in conscience to live peaceably and quietly in a civil society, shall in no way be molested or prejudged for their religious persuasions and exercise in matters of faith and worship; nor shall they be

compelled to frequent and maintain any religious worship, place or ministry whatsoever: Yet it is also hereby provided, that no man shall be admitted a member of the great or common Council, or any other place of publick trust, who shall not profaith in Christ Jesus, and solemnly declare that he doth no ways hold himself obliged in conscience to endeavour alteration in the government, or seeks the turning out of any in it or their ruin or prejudice, either in person or estate, because they are in his opinion hereticks, or differ in their judgment from him: Nor by this article is it intended, that any under the notion of this liberty shall allow themselves to avow atheism, irreligiousness, or to practice cursing, swearing, drunkenness, . . . murdering or any kind of violence, or indulging themselves in stage plays, masks, revells or such like abuses; for restraining such and preserving of the people in deligence and in good order, the great Council is to make more particular laws, which are punctually to be put in execution.

Extension activities:

- Students pretend they are the proprietors of New Jersey, and draft what they think is the best constitution for the colony. Students should be able to explain the reasons for the provisions of their constitution, the people it will serve, whether it is fair, and how it helps them.
- Students write a short essay: How much religious freedom should people have?
- How did the decisions of individuals and groups reflected in the foundational documents influence the creation of New Jersey and the United States?
- Consider and explain: Why are primary sources valuable records of the past? How do primary sources help us to understand what happened in the past?
- Visit the Proprietary House in Perth Amboy, NJ. Built 1762-1764, the Proprietary House was commissioned by the Board of Proprietors of East Jersey to serve as the official residence for then-Royal Governor William Franklin, son of Benjamin Franklin. In addition to the Royal Mansion, the house later served as a private residence, a hotel, a Civil War hospital for Union officers after the battle of Gettysburg, an orphanage, a retirement home, and an apartment building as late as the 1950's, before it was turned into an historic museum. Go to www.proprietaryhouse.org/ or call 732-826-5527 to make an appointment to visit.